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New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Raytchev
	Cameroon	Mr. Chungong Ayafor
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Trautwein
	Guinea	Mr. Sow
	Mexico	Mr. Pujalte
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Ms. Menéndez
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on preparations for an International Conference on the Great Lakes region (S/2003/1099)

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03-62442 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on preparations for an International Conference on the Great Lakes region (S/2003/1099)

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 37 of its provisional rules of procedure to the representative of the presidency of the African Union, Mr. Francisco Madeira, Minister of the Presidency for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Issues of Mozambique.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the representative of the presidency of the African Union, the Minister of the Presidency for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Issues of Mozambique.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Madeira (Mozambique), took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to invite the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to participate in the discussion, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr. Abdulkader Shareef.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Shareef (United Republic of Tanzania), took a seat at the Council table.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Italy, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Spatafora (Italy), took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Keli Walubita.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Walubita (African Union), took a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I welcome Mr. Fall and invite him to take a seat at the Council table.

Expression of sympathy to the Government and people of Turkey and the Government and people of the United Kingdom in connection with the recent terrorist acts in Istanbul

The President: On behalf of the members of the Security Council, I wish to express to the Government and people of Turkey, as well as the Government and people of the United Kingdom, our heartfelt sympathy for the innocent lives lost as a result of the terrorists acts in Istanbul today and over the weekend, which the Council strongly condemns.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. Members have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for an international conference on the Great Lakes Region (S/2003/1099).

As there is no list of speakers, I would like to invite Council members to indicate to the Secretariat if they wish to take the floor.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and I invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): You have before you, Mr. President, the report (S/2003/1099) in which I have described the preparations for an international conference on the Great Lakes region. This is an old idea which has been revived by developments in the situation on the ground.

Everyone knows that conflicts and instability in one country of the Great Lakes region, even if the result of internal factors, rarely remain internal for very long. They tend quickly to spread because of the close social, economic, cultural and linguistic links between the inhabitants of the entire region. That is why a comprehensive approach is necessary to attack the underlying and interdependent causes of conflict in the region.

(spoke in English)

That is why, ever since its presidential statement on Rwanda of 14 October 1994 (S/PRST/1994/59), the Council has supported an international conference on the Great Lakes. This support was reiterated in numerous subsequent statements and resolutions, including the presidential statement (S/PRST/1997/22) of 24 April 1997 on the Great Lakes region and, earlier this year, in resolutions 1457 (2003) and 1493 (2003) on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The first exploratory steps towards the organization of such a conference were taken between 1996 and 1997 by my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes. To expedite the process, in 1999 I appointed a Special Representative based in Nairobi to consult with the leaders of the region on the objectives and the organization of such a conference.

These consultations were undertaken in close partnership with the African Union, on the basis of a concept paper which I submitted to them. As a result, the core countries — Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda — agreed to the proposed international conference, and the preparatory process was launched in June 2003 in Nairobi.

The Nairobi meeting was essential in determining the future direction that the conference would take and in defining its objectives, themes, structure, composition and tentative timetable. The core countries stressed that the conference should be action oriented and focus on specific themes: peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration, and humanitarian and social issues. The core countries also stressed the principle of regional ownership. To this end, they have established national preparatory committees. In addition, the African Union has been, and will remain, a full partner of the United Nations in every stage of the process.

Equally vital is the need for international partnership. While the Governments of the region bear responsibility to consolidate peace in their countries, the international community has a duty to assist them at all levels, as it has done and is doing in other parts of the world. Indeed, the conference requires wide and sustained participation, not only from the Governments of the core countries but also from civil society, neighbours and friends in the region, subregional organizations and international development partners.

There is a new dynamic in the region, and we must capitalize on it. People are becoming more aware of the need to address peace, security and development issues regionally to consolidate advances made in national peace processes. This has helped set the stage for the preparations of the conference to proceed as planned. So, too, did the meeting held during the general debate in September, when the Declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation was adopted among countries of the region.

Obviously, there will be a relationship between progress in the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi and progress in the conference. And there will also be a relationship between our ability to meet certain challenges and the success of the conference. One challenge is for the core countries themselves to find a way to go further than

they have to date in addressing in detail the substantive issues of the conference. Another is to ensure that adequate financial, technical and human resources are made available, including for the Office of my Special Representative for the Great Lakes region.

To meet these challenges, I invite all involved to work closely with my Special Representative in support of the Conference. I also encourage all development partners to assist in providing the necessary support and resources to the effort. And I look forward to the strong support of the Council for the conference — a conference that is long overdue and which holds the promise of a better future for the long-suffering people of the countries of the Great Lakes region.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and thank him for honouring us with his presence at this meeting.

I now give the floor to the Minister of the Presidency for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Issues of Mozambique, Mr. Francisco Madeira, who is representing the Presidency of the African Union.

Mr. Madeira (African Union): We are gathering at a moment of hope and optimism for the Great Lakes region. We in the African Union and the United Nations have reasons to rejoice at the developments taking place in this region because, having known where the whole drama started and seen all the things that have taken place in the region, we are in a position to gauge the real meaning of what is happening there at the present moment.

This region has, until very recently, witnessed some of the cruelest acts a human being can inflict on another human being. The peoples of this region have, for far too long, endured some of the most brutal civil strife and absurd forms of invasion and occupation of one independent country by another. We have witnessed the most despicable acts of genocide in Rwanda, which claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. For far too long, the Congolese people have been denied their sovereignty, independence and dignity. They have been despised, vilified and martyred. They have fled Congo in the thousands to live as refugees in neighbouring countries.

Despite the complexity of the whole situation, important strides have been made in the region. The sun seems to be rising on the horizon and the peoples of the Great Lakes region are defying their pessimism and beginning to follow the path of peace and stability again. They are taking steps to reaffirm their threatened sovereignty and identity. They are rediscovering the virtues and advantages of life in harmony and good-neighbourliness and they are creating conditions for the economic and social development of their region.

Indeed, what is happening in the Great Lakes region today is the blossoming of what the peoples of this great region have always wanted and what both the African Union and the United Nations have always advocated, stood for, invested in and tried to help them achieve.

In an environment of increased mutual suspicion and growing scepticism, the Congolese stakeholders signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of July 1999 with our support, persuasion and encouragement. In encouraging the Congolese to enter into such an agreement, we were motivated by the desire to help remove the main obstacles to our all-inclusive process of national reconciliation through the drafting of a new deal among the Congolese people. This deal would set the country on the course of lasting peace and sustained development.

The cessation of hostilities between the Congolese parties, the disengagement of foreign troops from the conflict and the negotiation of their withdrawal by addressing the neighbouring countries' legitimate security concerns through an effective neutralization of the negative forces operating from the Congo, all these were important steps in the creation of an environment conducive to genuine dialogue among the Congolese themselves.

The Lusaka Agreement was not perfect and did not satisfy everyone, but it reflected what was possible at the moment. It contained important prerequisites that would keep the parties from losing sight of what needed to be addressed in the complex Congolese reality. It proved decisive in bringing the process to where it is today.

But no matter how perfect the Lusaka Agreement could have been, it would have led nowhere if the Congolese parties themselves had not shown the commitment to move forward and work for a radical change of the status quo in their country. It took time for all the stakeholders to realize and come to grips with the fact that a deal, a genuine deal where no Congolese would be a loser but every Congolese would

win something, was the only option left and the only way out of a crisis that has been haunting Congo since independence. In the end, reason prevailed and Sun City was the result of a common desire by Congo's leadership to come face to face with their own situation and rebuild their country on a new foundation.

The construction of the new Congo on a new basis has started, and we, in the African Union, are happy to see that the implementation of the Sun City agreement, although still fraught with many challenges, is on a good course and every Congolese wants it to succeed. Indeed, the institutions of transition, as provided for in the Sun City agreement, though still fragile, are in place and are striving to produce results.

Despite the magnitude of the Congolese crisis and despite the fact that the country has, for quite some time, been divided by the force of arms into zones of exclusive influence and jurisdiction of different armed organizations, the idea that the country should preserve its territorial integrity and remain united, with only one army, has prevailed and is being upheld by everyone. All parties have agreed that democracy, good governance and the rule of law are values that must, as a mark of necessity, guide all State behaviour.

These are important strides. With them, Congo rediscovers itself and vows to re-embrace the lofty ideals of the abandoned National Sovereign Conference, which was viewed by the majority of the Congolese population as a solid foundation for the democratic process in the country.

This is an extremely good beginning, and we in the African Union, the United Nations and the wider international community must continue to lend our support, advice and encouragement. In doing so, we must not lose sight of the fact that it is not yet all roses in the Congo. The process is still delicate and afflicted with weaknesses that, if not properly tended to at this early stage, may seriously compromise the ultimate objectives the Congolese have set for themselves.

We cannot emphasize enough that, whatever good is being done today in the Congo, the situation will remain precarious unless and until it is identified with and owned by the Congolese peoples themselves. History tells us that before Sun City, all the Congolese leaders who came to power after Patrice Lumumba's demise were maintained in power or came to that position through the support of foreign entities. Given the nature of that support, the result was the alienation of the Congolese people, the disintegration of Congo's State institutions and a total destruction of the economic, social and political environment of the country. Therefore, despite our closeness to the Congolese people and the immense trust they put in us, we should at all times avoid the temptation to profit from the weaknesses of that country.

Congo is almost starting from scratch. The task before the newly appointed transitional authorities — and that of the Government that will come after it — is simply of mammoth proportions. Since the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the gravitational centre of the Great Lakes region, any positive or negative development that takes place there will impinge, positively or negatively, not only on the Congo herself, but also on the rest of the countries of the region.

The wars that affected the Congo from 1996 until recently and brought so much suffering to its people were, to a large extent, motivated and fuelled by the exportation of conflicts begun in the neighbouring countries. The massive movement of populations — from the Congo to its neighbours and vice versa — caused by those wars put much strain on the inhabitants, resources and infrastructure not only of the Congo itself, but of all the neighbouring countries, making the crisis a common denominator for the entire region.

We in the African Union are happy that the Congo today is free of foreign occupation and domination. What is important now is that decisive steps be taken to ensure that the practice of occupying other peoples' countries — for whatever reason — does not occur again, for that practice not only reminds us of our own sad past, but sets a very dangerous and explosive precedent with great potential to perpetuate crisis and instability in the region.

That does not mean that we should ignore the security concerns of Congo's neighbours. Those concerns are real and legitimate, and we should together continue to strive to ensure that the solutions envisaged so far are quickly, effectively and verifiably implemented, thus easing the intense mutual suspicion that mars the relations among neighbours who are condemned to continue to live together for the rest of their lives.

But the region's interest in the Congo is not limited only to security guarantees. Congo is a big country; Congo is a big market; Congo is endowed

with many resources, a huge population and immense business opportunities. Congo is attractive to all of us. We all want to interact with Congo, and it is good that we do so. What is needed is that such interaction be carried out on the basis of healthy principles. We should endeavour to help Congo regain its statehood and strengthen its institutions, while striving to establish correct and appropriate bilateral and multilateral business and other relations with that important neighbour. I know this may sound naïve, but I see no other sound way to interact with Congo in a peaceful, sustainable and harmonious way.

We cannot but rejoice at the fact that Rwanda, which has been particularly affected by the generalized crisis gripping the Great Lakes region, has just emerged from presidential and parliamentary elections. That event — happening, as it did, less than 10 years after the genocide of 1994 — is a crucial step forward and an important contribution to the overall effort to restore peace, stability and reconciliation to the region. Efforts must continue to be made so as to ensure that every Rwandan can return home and freely go about his life.

The agreement signed last Sunday between the Burundi transitional Government and the armed movement, the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Front pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) is another milestone in the right direction. It makes us feel that the Great Lakes region is coming together again and acquiring the status of a region where, very soon, peace and stability will be common currency — a region that will become a melting pot where all peoples of our continent and of the world at large can freely and easily have access to and meet to trade and exchange ideas. The Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu/Forces nationales pour la libération (PALIPEHUTU/FNL) must be denied the possibility of preventing that from coming true. That organization must be persuaded to join in and make its contribution to the peace revolution taking place in the Great Lakes region.

It is high time that we stop the wars on our continent. There can be no sustainable development in the Great Lakes region without an environment of lasting peace and security. In that connection, the African Union would like to appeal very strongly to the Security Council to discharge its responsibilities through a more positive attitude towards supporting the African Mission in Burundi.

Armed conflicts and the threat thereof have, to a large extent, been responsible for the exasperating economic and social backwardness of a significant number of our countries as we move to divert considerable resources from socio-economic objectives to buying military hardware to wage war or defend ourselves against armed aggressions — real, potential or imaginary. We have come a long way so far in our quest to rid the continent and the region of armed strife, and we have scored considerable successes in that endeavour. The New Partnership for Africa's Development is the African Union vision and the road map to extricate the African continent from poverty, backwardness and underdevelopment. The implementation of that political, economic and social action programme will continue to be seriously compromised if instability and wars are allowed to continue to haunt Africa.

One of my country's priorities as Chair of the African Union is to work hand in hand, in earnest, with the Commission of the African Union to ensure that the protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union is signed, ratified and quickly acceded to by the largest possible number of member States so that it can enter into force. That is because we strongly believe that the Peace and Security Council of the African Union can be a valuable tool in helping to avert, ease and solve the conflict situations, insecurity and crises on our continent.

President Chissano, in his capacity as Chairperson of our continental organization, has committed himself to devoting particular attention to the remaining pockets of instability in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere on our continent and to mobilizing the best skills our continent possesses to help find a speedy and lasting solution to them. Given the particular nature of those conflicts, he has — together with His Excellency Mr. Alpha Omar Konaré, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union —discussed the possibility of requesting a number of serving heads of State to get personally involved and to lend their skills in the search for appropriate solutions to these conflicts.

We view with satisfaction the fact that the United Nations and all its partners have adopted a global approach to the situation in the Great Lakes region and are developing strategies that will address the reality of the Great Lakes in all its perspectives and view them as

a problem affecting not just one or another country, but the commonality of the countries and populations of the region.

The forthcoming conference on peace, security and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region represents a great challenge — a unique opportunity for all of us to come up with ideas and strategies that will truly contribute to shaping a future of stability, hope and reconciliation in the afflicted Great Lakes region.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdulkader Shareef, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Shareef (United Republic of Tanzania): I should like, on behalf of the countries of the Great Lakes region, to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, and to all the members of the Security Council, for having convened this special meeting to discuss the proposed international conference for the Great Lakes region. This is a clear demonstration of the solidarity and interest of the United Nations and the African Union in the development of the Great Lakes region as a zone of peace and stability and, therefore, of the urgent need to resolve pending security issues and to address the socio-economic problems facing the region.

We recall with appreciation the mission of the members of the Security Council earlier this year to the countries of the Great Lakes region. It was an encouraging expression of concern over the situation there and of solidarity with the Governments and people of the region. The deployment of French peacekeeping troops and the subsequent expansion and presence of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is contributing significantly in the stabilization and restoration of peace in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The human rights situation has also improved remarkably. We thank the entire peacekeeping mission for the work that it is undertaking.

We are particularly appreciative that, after almost a decade of intensive consultations among various stakeholders, a consensus has finally been reached on convening an international conference on the Great Lakes region. In this regard, we would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, for their tireless efforts in building both regional and international consensus for this important conference.

We also owe special gratitude and appreciation to the African Union for its political encouragement and involvement in preparations for the conference. The Chairman of the African Union is providing needed support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who is working closely with the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union will continue to be crucial for the success of the conference.

At the first meeting of the National Coordinators of the international conference for the Great Lakes region, held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 23 to 24 June 2003, the six core countries unanimously welcomed the proposed conference. The region also endorsed four themes: peace and security; economic development and regional integration; democracy and good governance; and social and humanitarian issues. In our view, those themes adequately cover the main challenges facing the Great Lakes region. The National Coordinators also agreed on the structure and timetable for the preparatory process.

The proposal to hold an international conference on the Great Lakes region has come at an appropriate time, when all signs indicate that conflicts in that region are nearing an end. The holding of the conference will thus consolidate the overall achievements by the countries of the region and, in particular, the progress made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi peace processes.

In this context, we welcome the agreements reached in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the installation of an all-inclusive transitional Government, which will prepare that country for a democratic political dispensation in two years' time. In the same vein, we also welcome the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, signed on 28 August 2000, which constitutes the cornerstone of the Burundi peace process. We congratulate the Transitional Government of Burundi and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Force pour la défense de la démocratie for the historic global ceasefire agreement signed in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, on 16 November 2003, which aims to end 10 years of conflict in Burundi. We urge

the two parties to cooperate closely in its implementation. Meanwhile, we appeal to the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu/Forces nationales pour la libération faction to stop fighting and join the negotiations for a ceasefire and a comprehensive peace accord.

The immediate task in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi is the consolidation of the peace accords through a comprehensive programme for post-conflict reconciliation, reconstruction and development.

The proposed conference for the Great Lakes region is expected to agree on a set of principles on good-neighbourly relations, stability, democracy and the launch of programmes of action for socio-economic revival and development for the people of the region. We believe that one of the major causes of the political and social instability in the region has been, to a great extent, the state of underdevelopment and poverty in the region, which should be addressed decisively by that conference.

On issues of peace and security, the conference will be judged to have succeeded if it produces concrete measures designed to ensure a comprehensive safeguard against a future resurgence of violence, genocide and instability in the region, as well as to contain cross-border criminality, including the illicit trade in drugs and small arms and illegal immigration. A pact against the recurrence of genocide, a non-aggression treaty and a programme with clear time limits aimed at disbanding militias and prohibiting the supply of illegal small arms to the region, with an agreed mechanism for enforcement and verification, would ensure not only peace and security in the region, but also democracy, justice and good governance within the borders of each country. We believe that those are the conditions necessary for sustainable peace and development in the Great Lakes region.

In the specific area of economic development, it is perplexing that the Great Lakes region, which is endowed with abundant natural resources, is also among the least developed areas of Africa. Our expectation, therefore, is that after restoring peace and security, the international community should mobilize and provide substantial economic assistance to enable the countries of the Great Lakes region to harness their enormous economic resources, in partnership with bilateral and multilateral support from the international community, for the recovery and development of their economies and the well-being of their people.

We trust that the conference will result in the establishment of a kind of Marshall Plan for the recovery and reconstruction of the Great Lakes region. We therefore appeal to our development partners to provide adequate resources, specifically targeted to enable the countries of the Great Lakes region to achieve their development goals and develop programmes for regional cooperation and integration. The New Partnership for Africa's Development offers an added opportunity for the countries of the Great Lakes region to realize their respective national and regional economic development goals.

On the humanitarian front, the Great Lakes region has, over the past decade, witnessed massive movements of refugees, displaced persons and victims of gross human rights violations. We expect the conference to provide an opportunity to refocus international attention on facilitating the implementation of durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants, as well as on encouraging an environment conducive to tolerance and respect for human rights.

I should point out that, in preparing for the conference, it has been recognized that a key to the success of the preparatory process of the conference is the involvement of major stakeholders in the envisaged conference outcomes. National committees need to be supported in overseeing and coordinating intergovernmental consultations and the participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups, such as those involving youth or women.

The main constraint experienced by all our national committees is the lack of budgetary resources to organize meetings of major grass-roots stakeholders to enable them to provide necessary inputs for achieving and sustaining the peace, stability and development objectives of the countries of the Great Lakes region. We also appeal to the international community to provide financial and material support towards the preparation of the conference in its different stages.

This issue of resources was raised at the Nairobi National Coordinators Meeting, but, in the end, it was not clear where the resources for the preparatory process would come from. Each country was left to fend for itself. Consequently, the status of preparations

for the conference at the national level is not satisfactory. It is important, therefore, that measures be taken, on an urgent basis, by the United Nations, as well as bilateral initiatives, to provide support expeditiously to facilitate the preparatory process and enable it to proceed. According to the time frame approved by the national coordinators, the first national preparatory committee meeting was supposed to be held in Nairobi in October 2003.

The United Republic of Tanzania is particularly keen on the success of this conference. We have been given the responsibility of hosting the first summit, scheduled for June 2004. It is important for all of us who are involved to ensure that preparations for the conference are made in a timely and efficient manner at every stage.

Finally, I want to underscore the fact that, for the conference for the Great Lakes region to succeed, it is important for the countries of the region to assume ownership of the process, as outlined by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. At the national level, the process has already started as an all-inclusive endeavour. We commend the ongoing work of Mr. Ibrahima Fall and his team, in partnership with the African Union. We shall continue to work with him and extend all the needed support from our respective national committees.

In conclusion, I should like once again to thank the Secretary-General and the Security Council for having convened this meeting and to thank the countries of the Great Lakes region for having appointed the United Republic of Tanzania to address the Council on their behalf.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Keli Walubita.

Mr. Walubita: I have travelled all the way from Africa to come and attend this very important meeting. I arrived this morning at 7 o'clock, and I am already seated before the Council to demonstrate to it how important the item on the agenda this morning is to us in Africa.

I want to thank you, Mr. President, and the Republic of Angola for the initiative you have taken, as President of the Security Council for the month of November, to ask for this open debate on the proposed international conference for the Great Lakes region. I must humbly thank you for that initiative.

You will recall that the last time Angola brought me here is when I was Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zambia, during our temporary misunderstandings; we sat here together. I am very happy that an opportunity has been extended to me to be here today in my capacity as Special Envoy of the African Union. I must thank Mozambique's Minister Madeira for his statement on behalf of us all on the African continent.

I wish also to thank Minister Shareef, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tanzania, for representing us in the Great Lakes region. I must, of course, thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his briefing this morning. Let me thank for having given this process a very able diplomat in the name of Ibrahima Fall, whom I have known for many, many years; to us, in this process, it is a rare gift. His commitment to the process has been tremendous.

I must admit that, without his efforts, we might not have moved a step further forward in responding to the challenge of the international community to prepare for an international conference for the Great Lakes region. I am therefore very grateful to the Secretary-General for having given us a person who has done so much within a short period of time. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Nairobi has expanded in order to respond to the challenges involved in preparing for this process.

In February 2002, I was appointed Special Envoy of the African Union to the Republic of Liberia, and I laboured in Liberia to try to bring understanding. By October 2002, when I was being transferred from Liberia, a process had already been undertaken that involved the possibility of a dialogue between the Government and the rebels. In October, I was appointed Special Envoy of the African Union to the Great Lakes region, to work with my own brother, Ibrahima Fall, in preparing for this international conference.

It has not been easy for us in the African Union to respond 100 per cent to the demands of this process, but I want to assure you, Mr. President, that in the African Union, with President Konare as the new Chairman of the Commission, everything is being done

to respond to these challenges before the international community.

My own belief — that we have done so much already — has been echoed in the various statements we have heard this morning and at consultative meetings we have held. All six core countries, obviously, have agreed that we proceed, and they have agreed to appoint national coordinators and national preparatory committees. We have tremendous support from the six core countries with respect to moving ahead in arranging for the international conference on the Great Lakes region.

When we started, we had three terms of reference: to fight for peace and security for the Great Lakes region; to fight for democracy and good governance for the Great Lakes region; and, of course, to fight for economic development and regional integration for the Great Lakes region. But through various consultations a fourth cluster in the terms of reference has been added, namely on social and humanitarian affairs, so as to address the challenges the Deputy Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania alluded to, that is, issues relating to victims of violations of human rights, displaced persons and the larger issue, the refugee situation.

The third approach was to consult the neighbouring States of the Great Lakes region. My brother Ibrahima Fall and I travelled extensively to more than 20 African countries, consulting with each one of them. As you see in our reports, the response has been tremendous. All have agreed, to a great extent, that we go ahead with the preparatory process.

There are two issues here; first, the participation of Zambia, which geographically is part of the Great Lakes region, connected by Lake Tanganyika, and secondly, the proximity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the region, which is an issue that needs to be clarified as we go along. We held the first conference of national coordinators in Nairobi. The importance of that conference was that it provided us with a road map and a time frame for certain activities to take place. But here I want to mention one obvious difficulty. Although the six core countries agreed to appoint national coordinators and to set up national preparatory committees, by the time we met in Nairobi only one or two countries were able to submit to us the full details of the members of their national preparatory committees. Therefore, it might not be possible for us to hold, before the end of the year, the regional preparatory meetings, because of the absence of input from most of the six core countries.

But hope is not lost. I want to assure you, Sir, that when President Konare recently met Ibrahima Fall in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, he assured Mr. Fall that this process will be given first priority. However, we have very serious financial constraints in the African Union, and the arrangement for the Special Envoy still remains ad hoc. I still have to commute from Lusaka to Nairobi and to Addis Ababa for these meetings, although there are plans to set up an office in Nairobi for the Special Envoy, so that we have daily interactions with Ibrahima Fall. But that has not yet been possible.

Yesterday I was asked to travel here to present the African Union position this morning, but I want to assure you that our partnership with the United Nations in this process will be continuous and is crucial. There is no way the African Union will move backwards. We shall continue to be very active partners in the process. I want to assure you that President Konare and President Chissanó are very determined that we proceed as planned. A possible meeting is already in the pipeline, to be facilitated by the African Union, that will consist of African subregional groups, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (COMESSA). There is also a proposal for a meeting to take place in Addis Ababa before the end of November 2003. The main idea is that the regional subgroupings of Africa must also participate in the process.

One part of our mandate in this process is that we should not interfere with the ongoing peace processes in Burundi and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We want to assure you — here we agree with Minister Madeira and Minister Shareef — that we are actively watching the situation, so that the two peace accords can mature irreversibly, even before the conference proceeds. We are very hopeful, because of the signs we have seen in Rwanda, in Congo and in Burundi, that we will be able to proceed, not only with the preparatory process, but also with the holding of the conference.

There are already, according to our time frame, a number of meetings set. Most importantly, by May next

year we hope to have the first meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Great Lakes region to prepare for the first round of the summit in June 2004 to be held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. At this stage, I want to thank the United Republic of Tanzania for offering to hold the first summit of the conference. As a result of this positive gesture from Tanzania, Nairobi has already indicated to us, in the preparatory process, that they are willing to host the second summit of the conference.

The appeal from the African Union is for logistical support. We require financing. I want to assure you that our involvement will not take the process backwards, but forward. But above all, once again let me thank Angola and thank the Security Council for the support that they are already giving us. I believe my brother Ibrahima Fall will shed more light on a number of consultations that he undertook in that connection. From our side, however, we want to say that President Konare has firmly undertaken to give this process first priority and that is why I am here.

I want to assure you that we will participate fully, and I join the calls, already made by the Secretary-General and the ministers, that we require logistical support from the international community and the donor community, while we try to help ourselves on the African continent. This is merely a brief statement and, perhaps later on in the debate, we will be given an opportunity to answer some of the queries or shortcomings that the United Nations Security Council might have observed.

In conclusion, on behalf of my delegation from the African Union, I thank you, Sir, for this very valued opportunity to address the United Nations Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Keli Walubita for his comprehensive statement and his kind words addressed to me and members of the Council.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on your effective leadership of the Council during the month of November. The initiative of this morning shows how well you are leading the Council.

I thank you for giving us an opportunity to debate this important issue.

The European Union is convinced that the fundamental problems affecting the Great Lakes region require a regional approach. For the first time since 1994, positive developments in the concerned countries have created concrete prospects for lasting political stability in the area and have allowed for realistic steps forward in the organization of an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development for the Great Lakes. As the Secretary-General said this morning, there is a new dynamic in the region. The European Union supports the initiative for such a conference under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union and commends the efforts of the involved countries and of the Secretary-General to this end. As has been noted before, it is long overdue.

Allow me to share a few points with you as the European Union's contribution to today's debate.

We are fully aware of the importance of African ownership in this process, as Minister Madeira and others have emphasized. The success of the conference will depend primarily on the common political will of the countries involved in achieving shared objectives, and we welcome the emergence of a positive attitude towards the conference in the countries of the region.

The European Union sees the conference as the beginning of a process of normalization rather than a one-time event. We believe it is important to establish clear and realistic objectives that can be attained in the agreed time frame. The conference should not stop at establishing principles, but should ideally result in concrete operational agreements or projects. Coordination, coherence and consistency with other existing processes, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), is also important, as is the need to avoid duplication with other forums.

The full and effective participation of all countries in the region, including all the countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa, is also crucial, as well as the

involvement of subregional organizations, international financial institutions, observer countries and the European Union. In addition, the establishment of a group of friends will provide a valuable forum for discussion and coordination of international support for the conference.

Among the issues to be addressed, peace and security are clearly central. We welcome the declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation, signed in New York on 25 September of this year by some of the countries of the region, which already identify the main principles to be applied, namely: respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State; non-interference in neighbours' internal affairs; and control of arms trafficking and supplies directed to other countries. Breaking the cycle of conflict, arms trade and illegal exploitation is one of the main issues that the conference should address.

We also expect the conference to play an important role in promoting trade, investment and economic cooperation and integration within the region. The challenge ahead is that of ensuring that the immense natural resources of the region are exploited for the social and economic development of the entire population. The active participation of the private sector and regional organizations in this regard is also welcomed.

Finally, the conference provides an opportunity for the countries of the region to address crucial issues, such as good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the advancement of which may help to restore confidence between Governments and their respective populations. The African Union and NEPAD already provide a valid and agreed framework for tackling those issues. A thorough discussion on transitional justice and the need to end impunity may also contribute to the regional reconciliation process. In addition, the strong involvement of civil society will be welcomed.

Consolidating the peace processes in the region will be a fundamental element in the success of the conference. The European Union, along the lines indicated by the United Nations and the African Union, has played an important role in this, as demonstrated recently by the European Union-led operation "Artemis", which provided immediate relief for the civilian population and was an example of successful crisis management.

Today the European Union is strongly committed to supporting the new Congolese institutions through a major post-conflict programme of assistance. Our focus is on demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants, the creation of an integrated police unit and the preparation for elections by the year 2005. The preparation for elections could prove a very difficult task in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We support the efforts of United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this regard and hope that it will be possible to draw on its logistics, since the success of the electoral process will depend largely on the availability of adequate transport and communication facilities.

As for Burundi, we congratulate South Africa, the Governments of the Regional Initiative and the African Union for brokering an agreement between the transitional Government and the group, Forces pour la défense de la démocratie. We urge the group Forces nationales de libération to join the political process and we encourage the Government of Burundi to keep the door open to the negotiations.

The European Union and its member States will continue to support the African Mission in Burundi, deployed by the African Union. However, the long-term sustainability of this African-led force is seriously open to question. We believe that the option for a transfer of authority to the United Nations will need to be considered in due course to ensure peacekeeping in Burundi.

The elections in Rwanda also represent a key factor in the prevailing situation in the Great Lakes, as they are an important step towards national reconciliation and the consolidation of viable democratic institutions.

The Great Lakes area has become a major focus of European Union foreign policy, as it is a test case of the ability of Africa, with our support, to become master of its own destiny. The proposed conference could provide the right framework for ensuring that our support is based on a regional approach. We welcome the steps already taken in that direction and we pledge our continued support to the consolidation of peace and development in the region.

In concluding, I would like to add a few words in my national capacity. I see that on many of these issues — background issues, the hard issues of peace and security and the soft issues of development and good governance — were to be addressed by the President of the Republic of Italy, President Ciampi, the day before yesterday. Unfortunately, in the event, he was not able to attend. But I think it would be appropriate, without taking up more time, for me to supply the text of the President's statement for the Security Council records.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me. We look forward to seeing that statement later.

Now I give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Ibrahima Fall.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): The report of the Secretary-General before the Council is based on three key ideas: the structure of the process of the organization of the conference, its dynamics and the specific role to be played by the United Nations.

With regard to the structure of the organizational process, the report stresses the objectives assigned to the conference, on the one hand, and, on the other, the organizational frameworks of the conference. As described in paragraphs 6 and 8 of the report, the heads of State of the region are hoping to adopt and implement, at the conclusion of the consultations initiated by the first meeting of national coordinators in June 2003, a stability, security and development pact for the Great Lakes region based on four priority sectors — namely, peace and security, good governance and democracy, economic development and regional integration and humanitarian and social questions. Each of these four sectors will target priorities and outline in a practical and concrete manner policies, strategies, programmes, projects and specific activities which will have precise targets for the short, medium and long term, reflecting intersectoral relations.

Even though it is already now possible to have some idea of the priority concerns, following the talks with the Governments of the region, clearly, we must await the deliberations of the first regional preparatory meetings to establish the priorities that all of the States of the region will decide on in exercise of their sovereign will. The agreement of good-neighbourliness between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours, signed here in New York recently, and the statement made by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, speaking on behalf of all of the countries of the region — that already constitutes a valuable contribution.

As to the organizational framework of the conference, this consists of two levels, as described in the report. At the regional level, each country has a national coordinator appointed by the Government, as well as a national preparatory committee placed under the operational authority of the coordinator.

During the first meeting of the national coordinators, it was decided that each preparatory national committee would consist of a governmental component at the inter-ministerial level and a non-governmental component made up of representatives of civil society. It was also decided that special measures should be taken by each country to guarantee quantitative and qualitative representation of women and young people in each national preparatory committee.

Finally, it was decided that each national committee would have a small support secretariat, the financing of which would require urgent international assistance. The functioning of the national preparatory committees — and therefore the implementation of the work done by the secretariats — is essential for the success of the preparatory process of the conference.

At the regional level, all of the national preparatory committees and their representatives make up the regional preparatory committee, and its work will be attuned to the initial preparatory phase of the conference.

Turning now to the organizational sequencing of the conference, a second major subject described in the report of the Secretary-General, this sequencing has been largely established and is based on a draft timetable containing two main principles: regional ownership and international partnership.

Regarding regional ownership, I think it would be useful for me to make the following comments: Firstly, the conference is intended to be a process, not an event. It will take place in two stages. The first stage, the expert stage, consists in meetings of the regional preparatory committees from June 2003 to May 2004. The major expected outcome is a report containing proposals on the guidelines for the future security,

stability and development pact, as well as practical ideas and proposals for action on each of the four themes of the conference.

This preparatory expert phase will be followed by the political preparatory phase, during which the ministerial committees, upon instructions from the first summit of heads of State to be held in June 2004 in Tunisia, will translate the experts' ideas and proposals into targets in the areas of policy, strategies, programmes and projects. The work of these ministerial committees will go on for some months, and the duration will be decided on by the first summit.

Finally, this preparatory phase will culminate in the second summit of heads of State, planned to be held in Kenya, although the date has not yet been decided on, and it, inter alia, will adopt the security, stability and regional development pact, comprising the declaration of principle and programmes of action.

Regional ownership also means the active and decisive involvement by as broad a spectrum as possible of the main stakeholders in each country, including representatives of the various ministries concerned, representatives of civil society, as well as representatives of parliamentarians, union organizations and the business sector.

The United Nations has already been approached by several of these institutions and regional and international groups, some of which, such as the Nyerere Foundation, the ITEKA League of Burundi, and the International Peace Academy, have already organized or plan to organize by the end of the year, meetings to enhance the preparatory process of the conference.

In order to strengthen regional ownership, regional meetings of women and young people will be organized in order to better highlight, in each of the four themes of the conference, specific concerns of these two important social categories. The same applies to the meeting of the secretaries-general of the subregional organizations, which will cover all or part of the Great Lakes region, and the special envoy of the African Union — Mr. Keli Walubita, referred to this meeting just now — and it will be organized jointly by the African Union and the United Nations, and the date has just been decided on — from 8 to 9 December 2003.

Finally, in order to enhance the principle of regional ownership, apart from the core countries of the region, their neighbours will be invited to participate as observers throughout the entire conference. Naturally, the decisions relating to the conference, including projects, will depend on the will of the States of the region. The United Nations, the African Union, the neighbouring countries and international development partners should give full support to the principle of regional ownership, which was decided on by the heads of State of the region as one of the basic conditions for their agreement to hold the conference.

The second pillar of the process for the conference is the principle of international partnership, and this is covered in paragraphs 24-27 of the report. This principle encompasses several levels. First of all, it is reflected in the recognition of the importance of the participation, from the beginning to the end of the organizational process of the conference, of bilateral and multilateral development partners of the Great Lakes region. It is further expressed in the status of active observer granted to development partners. While the practical and operational conditions of this observer status remain to be clarified, it emerged very clearly during the meeting of National Coordinators that development partners will have the right not only to attend meetings, but also to take the floor and to contribute to the debates.

Finally, the principle of international partnership is the basis of the imminent establishment, on 4 December 2003 in Geneva, of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region, thanks to the facilitation provided by Canada following consultations with the United Nations and the African Union. The Group will provide a framework for information exchange, consultation, cooperation and the harmonization of the individual and collective actions and initiatives of the international community of development partners for the preparation and holding of and follow-up to the international conference on the Great Lakes region. The principle of international partnership will play a particularly important role at the second summit of heads of State, at which the stability, security and development pact is to be adopted, and throughout the follow-up phase to the conference, in which the pact will be implemented and periodically assessed.

The role of the United Nations is the third important element highlighted by the report for the

preparation and convening of the conference. It can be analysed at three levels. The first is the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Basically, this is a question of the United Nations providing technical support for the national preparatory committees; the secretariat responsible for preparing and convening the follow-up meetings of the regional preparatory committee; political guidance for the discussions in the thematic meetings; institutional coordination of the contributions of the various departments, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system; and assistance in mobilizing the international community for the conference.

In that respect, the Office of the Special Representative works in close cooperation with the various United Nations missions and offices in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi and with all of the coordinators of the United Nations system in every country of the region.

Finally, a steering group has been established incorporating all of the United Nations agencies represented in Nairobi. It will serve as a framework for coordinating the system's contributions to all aspects of the preparation and holding of the conference. It is in this setting that the work in each of the conference's four thematic areas will be coordinated by one United Nations entity, represented in Nairobi.

The second level will be based in New York, where an inter-departmental and inter-agency working group has been established within the Secretariat and meets periodically to coordinate contributions to the conference. As the report notes and as the Secretary-General reiterated in his opening statement, it is important that the Office of the Special Representative

> "be provided with adequate resources so that it can meet the increasing demands that the launching of the preparatory process prompted". (*S/2003/1099, para. 29*)

The third level is the Security Council. The role of the Security Council, as the organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, is of crucial importance in the preparation and convening of the conference; in providing political guidance in the conference process; in giving essential diplomatic support; and in mobilizing the international community for the conference. Indeed, from the perspective of any of the four thematic areas, the conference ultimately hinges on the question of security in the most noble meaning of that word — human security.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to reiterate your condemnation, Sir, of the odious terrorist attack on the British consulate and other targets in Istanbul. We offer our British colleague our most heartfelt condolences.

I thank Mr. Fall and those who spoke earlier for the information they have provided us on the preparation for the international conference for peace in the Great Lakes region. I believe that the members of the Security Council have duly noted the commitment of the African Union to the preparatory work for the conference.

I support the statement made by our Italian colleague on behalf of the European Union and wish simply to make a few additional comments.

The importance of this exercise has been amply demonstrated. The conflicts that continue to affect the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, as well as the earlier conflict in Rwanda, cannot be understand in isolation. Borders have not stopped the movements of armed rebellions, military interventions by States, or the traffic in weapons and raw materials. The full normalization of relations among the Governments of the region and the implementation of confidence-building measures to ensure border security are therefore the basic objectives of the conference.

France feels that three conditions need to be met in order to ensure the conference's success. We believe, first, that participation in the first round should be open to all neighbouring States, including the Western neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. We feel that ownership of the conference by Africans — which is being prepared, as we have heard this morning — can be made possible only if Governments that legitimately wish to take part in the conference are not excluded.

Secondly, we believe that the principal themes should be prioritized to answer to the main concerns of the States involved. Security questions, clearly, must remain the top priority. Other issues — such as regional economic cooperation — are still important, but, as Mr. Fall noted, we must ensure that the conference is not sidetracked by considerations that fall within the competence of other bodies.

Thirdly, we believe that the conference should seek to achieve tangible results. The eventual development of a follow-up mechanism should not relegate to a lower priority the holding of a substantive discussion about the most essential problems affecting the peace and stability of the region. The States concerned are in agreement about the principles that should guide their relations. They confirmed that on 25 September 2003, during their presence here at the invitation of the Secretary-General. We believe that the conference should be an opportunity for them to translate commitments into action. If the participants in the meeting to be held next June in Tanzania decide that two summits will be held, that idea should not diminish the chances for a definitive conclusion of the work of the conference.

The important thing today is to seize the opportunity provided by the progress made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi and to take advantage of the hopes for national reconciliation that that progress has provided. Let us not run the risk losing the momentum that the conference itself will be producing.

My comments lead into two questions that I would like to pose to Mr. Fall. The first concerns the request made by neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that have not yet been included in the preparations for the conference. How will they be guaranteed that the conference will indeed take place in an inclusive manner, namely, including them? My second question pertains to security issues, which go right to the heart of our concerns. What specific steps are being envisaged for implementation after next June's summit?

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I would like to express my condolences at the great number of innocent people who have become casualties as a result of the explosions in Istanbul and to condemn the violent actions of terrorists. I also extend our condolences to the representative of the United Kingdom on its victims.

I wish to thank Secretary-General Annan for the statement he has just made. We also welcome the representative of the presidency of the African Union — the Foreign Minister of Mozambique — as well as the Deputy Foreign Minister of Tanzania, who have travelled a long distance. Their participation in today's meeting illustrates the support of African countries for the holding of the international conference on the Great Lakes region, as well as the importance they attach to it.

The situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa has been turbulent in recent years. That situation has had a serious deleterious effect on peace, stability and economic development in the region and in the African continent as a whole. There are complicated historical reasons for the problems in the Great Lakes region, but those problems are also influenced by many contemporary elements. Resolving them requires coordinated efforts on the part of the countries of the region, as well as tremendous assistance from the international community.

China believes that the parties concerned should proceed in the interest of peace and development on the African continent, especially in the Great Lakes region, as well as on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned and pursuant to the relevant United Nations resolutions and the agreements reached by the parties through dialogue and consultation to seek common ground, put aside their differences and increase their initial confidence in order to gradually resolve tensions and differences.

Thanks to the common efforts of African countries and the forceful encouragement of the international community, progress has recently been made in the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi. On the initiative of Secretary-General Annan, on 26 September 2003 the leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda issued in New York a declaration of principles for good-neighbourly relations and cooperation. That declaration expressed the good will of the parties and their commitment to peace and cooperation, thereby injecting new vitality into normalizing the situation in the countries concerned and accelerating the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. We hope that the parties concerned will continue to make efforts to maintain positive momentum and resolve outstanding problems.

China, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a friend of the countries of the Great Lakes region, has always paid close attention to developments in the situation in the region and has actively participated in, and promoted, a resolution of the hot-spot problems there. We have contributed

peacekeeping troops to the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and have provided logistical assistance to the peacekeeping forces of the African Union in Burundi.

China supports the initiative to convene an international conference on the Great Lakes region. We are encouraged by the progress made thus far in the preparatory work for the conference. We call on the international community to provide political and financial support for the success of that meeting. In that regard, we support the issuance of a presidential statement by the President of the Security Council at the end of today's meeting. We sincerely hope that, through common effort, the conference will be a good opportunity for the countries of the region to enhance dialogue, resolve differences, rebuild peace and discuss development. As always, China will play an active role in promoting the early realization of lasting peace in that region.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I am very grateful to the President for his remarks earlier in the meeting. I am also grateful to colleagues for their expressions of sympathy over another ghastly atrocity. I understand that there is a suggestion that a draft resolution may be introduced on that subject. If that is the case, perhaps I could invite the presidency to consider whether some work by our coordinators or some other representatives might facilitate the drafting of such a resolution so that, if we are going to have one, we vote on it quite quickly.

Like others who have spoken before me, we are very grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2003/1099), as well as to those who have made their opening statements. I of course associate myself fully with the remarks of the European Union presidency.

The Great Lakes region has been ravaged by conflict, atrocity and suffering. The people of the region have been waiting too long for peace, stability and the prospect for a better future. The good news is that there has been significant progress in 2003 with regard to the present conflicts — progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. I would like to join others in paying tribute to the role being played by the countries of the region, by the African Union and by special representatives.

There appears now to be a genuine beginning. Our responsibility around this table, and that of the people who are listening, is to ensure that this time, unlike in the past, the international community plays its part and supports developments that should have, and are increasingly having, the full involvement and ownership of the countries of the region. As in so many other areas — hearteningly — at the moment in Africa, we need to reinforce and support African-led initiatives. My Prime Minister has underlined his commitment that the United Kingdom — and, we hope, the international community — should better address the problems of Africa and support the real efforts being made by Africans to find solutions to those difficulties.

Real progress is being made to overcome conflicts, and those efforts will continue. The proposed conference is not a substitute for the existing peace processes in the Congo or Burundi. But a Great Lakes conference which we all support should focus on the aftermath of conflicts, on building the foundations of lasting peace through the reconstruction of war-damaged societies. That is why we agree with the key themes identified by Special Representative Fall in his consultations in the region: peace and security, economic cooperation, good governance, democracy and human rights.

It is primarily for the States of the region to develop those ideas further. We think that civil society can also play a part in the preparatory process. We agree also with the Special Representative's recommendation that the conference itself should be part of a process, establishing a framework for lasting cooperation, and not be just a one-time summit. Ideally, the outcome would be a set of principles and actions which the parties would commit themselves to and then implement. We hope that the conference will come up with specific plans — and I very much agree with the approach put forward by the French Ambassador — plans on how to take forward the shared goals of the countries of the region in areas such as trade and economic development, demobilization of armed groups and the safe return of refugees. Because it is through cooperation in practical areas of common interest that the tradition of working together will be developed and the scope and prospect of inter-State conflict much reduced. Developing regional trade and investment through the creation of free-trade zones, or even an internal market in goods and labour, can make a real contribution to economic development.

Thus, a conference should begin a process, a process between and within the countries of the region

and which covers all aspects relevant to post-conflict reconstruction, justice, rule of law, economic development, regional cooperation and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration — those practical issues basic to taking States forward to the sort of sustainable and continued development in enduring peace that they are now entitled to expect.

In preparing for the conference, and deriving from it, the United Kingdom hopes that the framework of a coordinated and real contribution by the international community will emerge. I think we should be quite clear that if the conference is to bring real value, if there is to be a difference on the ground, then the international community will have to support and harness resources in support of the Great Lakes, to further peace and sustainable development and to underpin solutions which are now being achieved increasingly within Africa and by African institutions. The people of the Great Lakes and our friends in Africa demand and expect no less of us.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation would also like to associate itself with the expressions of condolence to the United Kingdom and Turkey, following the terrorist acts that took place in Istanbul and with the condemnations of those acts.

We welcome the presence in the Chamber of eminent personalities and representatives of Africa.

Africa is confronting a new generation of challenges and threats, which are having a destabilizing effect on peace in countries of the region. Internal and international crises are engendered by the aggressive spread of illegal armed groups, weak State administration, poorly developed democracy, the failure to implement laws governing relations between peoples, impunity for massive violations of human rights and the norms of international humanitarian law, and the inability of leaders to provide for the sustainable socio-economic development of their States. There is no quick solution to those problems. Multilevel coordinated efforts are required both of the friends of Africa and, primarily, of Africans themselves.

We come to today's meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes region having made certain achievements. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the leadership of the transitional Government of national unity, life is returning to normal, despite the continuing instability particularly in the eastern part of the country. The peace process in Burundi is gaining ground despite the obstructionist position of one of the armed groups. Progress can be observed in relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. That is being promoted by the efforts of the States in the region. The United Nations and its Security Council have played a major role here. From 2000 to 2003, the Great Lakes region was visited by four Security Council missions. We are pleased that their work and recommendations proved essential. In particular, in September under the aegis of the Secretary-General, leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda adopted a declaration on principles of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation. Implementation of the provisions of that declaration has already started.

We are not blind to the risks and difficulties that still exist: the danger of a renewed outbreak of inter-ethnic confrontation, difficulties in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, illegal flows of small arms and light weapons, the problem of mercenaries, the use of child soldiers, uncontrolled borders, violence against civilians, the dire humanitarian situation and so on.

However, at the present time, the Great Lakes region is reaching a critical mass of positive factors, making it possible to move to a new type of relations among States of the region. The next effective step towards the complete normalization of the situation in the Great Lakes region, should be the holding of the international conference on this region under the aegis of the United Nations and the African Union. We agree that this event should be held within a time frame agreed to by the interested African States, and we agree with the forum's objectives and format. We are sure that the process of the work of the conference will help to resolve many interlocking regional problems and open the way to peace, security, democracy, socio-economic development and cooperation among States within the Great Lakes region.

However, I want to stress once again that the productivity of this conference primarily depends on how consistently the core players in the crisis of the Great Lakes region implement the various agreements and accords related to the ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi and implement the

goals of the inter-Congolese dialogue and border security.

Russia supports the advancement of the peace process in the Great Lakes region. We support the idea of the establishment of a group of friends of the conference on the Great Lakes region, and we are prepared to participate in its work. At the same time, we would like to propose that the conference's organizers give thought to the possibility of including in its work another participant: international business. For many decades, multinational companies exploited the natural and human resources of that very rich part of the world. Developing its still enormous potential for the benefit of the countries of the region would require new capital investment and entrepreneurship. Participation by their representatives in the conference could help it attain its goals.

The many years of bloody conflict in the Great Lakes region are an open wound on the body of the African continent. How quickly and effectively these conflicts can be resolved will determine to a large extent stability for the whole of Africa, which has endured such terrible trials. It is time to act quickly and effectively.

I would like to ask two questions.

I ask the first question of the representative of the presidency of the African Union. One of the most acute problems confronted in conflict situations in Africa, including in the Great Lakes region, is impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Impunity engenders new conflicts within countries, between neighbouring States and in whole regions as well. Our appeals to individual African States have so far not produced any results that we could rely on. They prefer to appeal to international forums. A great role in resolving these problems could be played by the regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union. My question is: what can the African Union do to combat impunity?

For my second question I turn to the representative of Tanzania. In June of this year, the Security Council mission visited the Great Lakes region, including Tanzania. The impression was created that regional countries can exert pressure on the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) to force that armed group to join the peace process in Burundi. My question is: what can the regional countries do to force the FNL to sit at the negotiating table?

Mr. Mekdad (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): We share your strong condemnation of the acts of terror in Turkey that have killed a number of innocent Turkish civilians, in addition to the British Consul-General in Istanbul. Allow me to express our grief and condolences to Turkey, our neighbour, and its people, as well as to the Government and people of the United Kingdom.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on the Great Lakes region. We also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his comprehensive and substantial statement this morning. We are pleased to welcome Mr. Francisco Madeira, Minister of the Presidency for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Affairs of Mozambique, whose country is the current President of the African Union. We are also delighted to welcome Mr. Abdulkader Shareef, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, which has been so generous in offering to host the preparatory meeting of the conference in 2004. We also welcome Italy as the current president of the European Union. We also believe that the presence of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Keli Walubita, confirms the concern that the African Union has for the success of this important conference. We welcome Mr. Ibrahima Fall, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and we thank him for the efforts he has made towards an excellent preparation of the conference.

Syria supports all international, regional and subregional efforts being made towards peace and security in the Great Lakes region and in the African continent in general. We also highly appreciate the efforts being made by the neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi towards that objective. These efforts will be crowned with the convening of an international conference on the Great Lakes region.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1099) and has understood the special details regarding the convening of the conference. We are cognizant of the difficulties that must be surmounted in order for the conference to succeed, at the national and the regional levels.

Syria encourages, all States concerned, particularly those in the Great Lakes region, to

participate actively in all stages of the preparation of the conference towards its success and the achievement of its desired goals. We also add our voice in appealing to donor countries to provide all possible material and logistical help required for the convening of the conference. We cannot fail to thank the African Union and South Africa for their efforts and effective participation, in addition to many other States that have taken a constructive role: Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Gabon, the Congo, Namibia and others. Syria stresses the importance of the international community providing every possible support to the process as a whole and to peace efforts in the region. Those efforts have begun to crystallize, as stated by the Secretary-General, whether in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi or Rwanda.

We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to the core countries participating in the conference to concentrate on the conference's priorities and to set up specific policies, programmes, projects and activities in the various sub-themes to be discussed at the conference. This would lead the conference to achieve peace, security, economic development and regional integration. We believe that this would in turn lead to an improvement of the humanitarian and social situation of the peoples of the region and would allow the peoples of the region to finally reap the fruits of peace.

We believe that the presidential declaration before us reflects our position and the desire of the Council to see success for this international conference on peace and security in the Great Lakes region. It also reflects the need for successful preparation for the conference. We are confident that the Security Council will adopt this draft presidential statement at the end of this debate, as a contribution by the Council to collective international efforts towards peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Mr. Pujalte (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of Mexico, I express our condemnation of the cowardly terrorist act which has taken the lives of so many and has injured even more in Turkey. We express the solidarity of the people and Government of Mexico to the families of the victims and to the Governments of Turkey and the United Kingdom on these events. I should like also to welcome our guests, Mr. Francisco Madeira, Mr. Abdulkader Shareef, Mr. Keli Walubita, and Mr. Ibrahima Fall and to express thanks for their statements and the statement of the Ambassador of Italy, Mr. Spatafora, as well as for his participation at this meeting.

I also wish to recognize the fact that you included on the Security Council's agenda for this month the subject of an international conference on the Great Lakes region. It could not have been otherwise, since Angola has the sensitivity and insight to determine that an initiative of that nature deserves the Council's unreserved support. Mexico recognizes the relevance of an international conference given the regional dimensions of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the economic, social and cultural links uniting the peoples of the region, and therefore the need to provide a regional solution to that conflict.

We congratulate the Secretary-General on his recent decision to appoint Mr. Fall to his current post so that he can continue to pursue issues related to such an international conference. We are sure that the joint efforts of Mr. Fall and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union will be fruitful, since they are channelled towards achieving a single objective.

Given the nature and dimensions of the conflict in the region, there is a need, in our opinion, to also involve the General Assembly and other organs and programmes of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions. Coordinated action is urgent in order to define a regional strategy that includes measures in areas such as peace and security, democracy, regional integration and humanitarian and social issues.

Above all, from our perspective, special attention needs to be devoted to resolving the problems at the roots of the conflict. The first of those — noted from Mr. Shareef's statement — is the fact that one of the major causes of the political and social instability in the region is, to a great extent, underdevelopment and poverty, which needs to be contemplated and considered at the conference. From our point of view, the conference needs to arrive at some solution or initiative to resolve the problem of underdevelopment. The second problem, from our perspective, is to recommend some kind of system to halt the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and explosive ordnance, which are also at the root of the region's problem.

My country welcomes the resolve of the region's countries to work on the preparatory process of the conference. We trust that the goal can be attained within the time-frame established by the national coordinators at the Nairobi meeting in June. With that conviction, my Government offers its full support for the conference's objectives and programme of work. The goal is ambitious, but it has indisputable merits nevertheless. The challenges are many, but they can be overcome with the necessary political will to do so and with the Security Council's commitment to shouldering its responsibility in promoting a lasting peace in the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Raytchev (Bulgaria): First of all, on behalf of the Republic of Bulgaria, I should like to express our strong condemnation of the vicious terrorist attacks that have occurred in Istanbul and to join others in expressing our deep sympathy with the families of all who have been affected by those terrorist acts.

We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for having organized this timely public meeting on the Great Lakes region. I should also like to welcome the presence at this meeting of the Minister of the Presidency for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Affairs of Mozambique, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tanzania, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, and to express to them our appreciation for their important contributions. My delegation is also grateful to the Secretary-General for his important presentation at this Security Council meeting.

Bulgaria, as an associated country of the European Union, fully supports the statement made earlier by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. In my national capacity, I should like to make the following comments.

Bulgaria welcomes the positive dynamics emerging in the Great Lakes region of Africa. The peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has made substantial headway in recent months. We are also witnessing encouraging developments with regard to the peace process in Burundi. We concur with the Secretary-General that it is important to capitalize on this new momentum. We think that this positive trend must be sustained and supported, including through a concerted multilateral regional approach and related actions.

We agree that the holding of an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region could make an essential contribution to the promotion and strengthening of the reconciliation processes in all States of that part of Africa. In our view, such a conference could also contribute to normalization of relations in all spheres among the countries in the region and to the establishment of confidence-building measures and mechanisms aimed at achieving lasting peace and stability.

Therefore, Bulgaria, like other countries, welcomes and unreservedly supports the initiative of organizing such a conference under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. We are pleased that the preparations for the conference are under way. Needless to say, such an international conference will have to be carefully planned if it is to be successful. In that regard, we note with interest the information provided by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2003/1099) and the briefings by the Ministers and Mr. Fall with regard to the initial preparatory work carried out thus far.

We are cognizant of the importance of African ownership of the whole process. The common political will of the States in the region to work in a concerted way to achieve shared goals is a key element, in our view, for the success of the proposed conference. In that respect, we appreciate the emerging readiness and willingness of the region's States to assist in the preparation and holding of a productive conference. My country would like to commend, in particular, Tanzania for having offered to host a summit in the course of 2004. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Walubita by the Commission of the African Union as a Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region.

It is our view that the Declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation, signed in New York on 25 September 2003 by the Governments of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, as well as the agreement between the transitional Government of Burundi and the Forces for the Defence of Democracy group, signed on 16 November in Dar-es-Salaam, have provided grounds for hope and optimism for normalization of the situation within the framework of the comprehensive peace process in the region. We believe that the international community should assist the efforts of the region's States, the United Nations

and the African Union with a view to facilitating the successful holding of the conference. In that regard, I should like to express our appreciation for Canada's efforts to establish a Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region, whose objective is to provide support to the conference.

In conclusion, I should like to say that we appreciate the draft text of the presidential statement submitted for the consideration of members of the Council and that we are prepared to fully support it.

Ms. Menéndez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation, too, would like express its vigorous condemnation of the recent attacks in Istanbul. We extend our sympathy to the families of the victims and to the Governments of Turkey and of the United Kingdom.

We are grateful to the Angolan presidency for having convened this open meeting on the Great Lakes region. We would like to express appreciation for the briefings provided today on this issue by our guests.

As we have said on previous occasions, we fully endorse the regional approach in addressing issues pertaining to the Great Lakes region — hence the importance of appropriate preparation for the international conference.

Given the complexity of the issues under discussion, we are of the view that the conference must be seen as a process, rather than a single event. We have heard a number of speakers, including Mr. Ibrahima Fall, express the same view.

The conference will have before it a broad range of questions relating to peace and security, good-neighbourliness, stability, democracy, good governance, economic development and regional integration, as well as humanitarian and social issues. It will be important, therefore, to define principles and goals, as well as concrete programmes and initiatives, relating to those areas, with a view to developing a plan of action that can bring about their implementation in practice.

With regard to good-neighbourly relations in particular, we welcome the signature, on 25 September, of the declaration on principles of good-neighbourliness and cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, and we appeal to the signatories to apply the principles set out therein. Such initiatives contribute to the creation of a climate of trust among the countries of the region, which is clearly conducive to peace and can reduce the potential for tension.

Among other hopeful developments, we should also mention the return to Rwanda, on 14 November, of General Paul Rwarakabije of the Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda.

We believe that, in order for the international conference to be a complete success, it should involve all the actors affecting the stability of the area. Furthermore, the follow-up mechanisms for the conference must be adapted to the complex realities of the region. To that end, we must have the support and cooperation of all relevant countries and institutions.

For our part, we will work actively within the European Union — the Italian presidency of the Union spoke earlier on behalf of all its members — on all initiatives in support of the conference. We will continue to demonstrate our commitment and provide support for peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to express condolences to the Government of Great Britain for the terrorist attack attributed to Al Qaeda that occurred in Istanbul and took the life of the Consul-General of the country, as well as the lives of many others. We also express our condolences to the Government of Turkey for the victims resulting from that criminal attack and the attack that took place last weekend. We intend to submit a draft resolution on this matter during this afternoon's meeting. We hope that it will be adopted unanimously.

We are grateful for the presence here today of the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tanzania; the Minister of the Presidency for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Affairs of Mozambique; the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

The regional dimension of conflicts has become clear with regard to other parts of Africa, as has the fact that there is great usefulness in cooperation between the Security Council and regional and subregional organizations in Africa. We need only mention the essential presence of the Economic Community of West African States — working in

direct cooperation with the Security Council — in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. My comments also apply fully to the appeal by the Council for the holding of an international conference on the Great Lakes region, based on the conviction that instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo could quickly spread to other countries of the region, that the peoples of the region have linguistic, cultural and social ties that bind them closely together and that, in the final analysis, conflict can be resolved only in a regional framework.

Chile supports the holding of the conference. We see it as a further sign that the African peoples have taken their destiny in their own hands, generating African solutions to African problems. We commend the active participation of important organizations, including the African Union, in support of this effort. We also welcome the fact that the first meeting of national coordinators was held in June, and we hope that the rather tight provisional timetable proposed by the Secretary-General in his report can be kept to.

In short, we believe that it is essential that the international community provide decisive support for the conference, so that the goals set out by the Secretary-General and the Security Council can be achieved. In this context, we enthusiastically support the presidential statement to be made later on this matter.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): At the outset, I, too, would like to join others in condemning the terrorist attack that took place today in Istanbul and in conveying our deep condolences to the Governments of Turkey and of the United Kingdom. We wish to welcome Mr. Madeira, Minister of the Presidency for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Affairs of Mozambique, who is here on behalf of the African Union; Deputy Foreign Minister Shareef of Tanzania; Mr. Walubita, representative of the Commission of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahima Fall. We wish to thank them and the Secretary-General for their important and comprehensive statements.

The year 1994 was a time of tragedy for the Great Lakes region. The effects of conflict and instability, which began in Rwanda and spread far, engulfing three countries, are still being felt far and wide throughout the whole continent. The year 2003 is the moment of hope. The Great Lakes conference should become a landmark for peace.

Conflicts in the Great Lakes region have multiple casualties. They resulted from the aftermath of colonization, a history of political and economic instability, ethnic hatred and rivalry and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Every conflict in the region has transborder linkages and effects. Indeed, conflicts have often spilled across borders, as we have seen in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The causes of conflicts are complex in the Great Lakes region and so are their solutions. While it is necessary to address a conflict at national and subnational levels, it is not possible to also sustain peace until it is achieved and sustained at the national level. In the Great Lakes region, as in West Africa, because of the transborder effects, a conflict in any given country cannot become completely resolved unless peace and stability is restored to the entire region. A regional approach to conflict resolution is therefore essential.

Pakistan fully supports the initiative to convene an international conference next year on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region. We commend the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ibrahima Fall, as well as those of his predecessors, in launching this process. We also welcome Tanzania's offer to hold the conference next year.

Pakistan supports the objectives of this conference. We join in encouraging full regional ownership and greater international partnership in the conference process. While supporting the conference initiative, the Security Council must also play a more corrective role in promoting peace and stability in the region. Peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts already authorized by the Council need to be augmented by further action-oriented measures and initiatives aimed at consolidating peace and eliminating some of the causes of conflict in the region.

First, we would call for the further expansion of the United Nations peacekeeping presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and as conditions permit, the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Burundi, subject to the agreement of all parties. A greater United Nations peacekeeping presence on the ground will enhance and

support the United Nations and African Union initiatives for peace in the region.

Secondly, in order to make more effective the arms embargo in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Security Council must consider ways to track the illegal exploiters of resources — who have tentacles throughout the region and beyond — to their sources of funds, as well as to the points where those funds are converted into arms.

Thirdly, both the causes of and the solutions to the conflicts in the Great Lakes region have political and economic aspects. The Security Council, which deals only with peace and security matters, is ill-equipped to address all of the issues comprehensively. The Economic and Social Council, on the other hand, deals with countries emerging from conflict. The situation in Burundi is an example which is being handled by both the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Perhaps it would be a more efficient use of the time and effort of both the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to form a composite committee or committees for the Great Lakes region to comprehensively address, and offer, solutions to the multidimensional aspects of the conflicts in the region.

Mr. Ayafor (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the condolences expressed to Turkey and the United Kingdom for the victims who died as a result of today's terrorist attack. We commend the Secretary-General for his statement and we welcome the presence in our midst of the Ministers of Mozambique and Tanzania and the representative of the Commission of the African Union.

Allow me to thank Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, for his clear and informative presentation and for his introduction to the report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region (S/2003/1099).

My country, by virtue of its geographical proximity to the region, welcomes in many respects the organization of this public meeting of the Council. We are convinced, and have been for a long time, that the holding of a conference of this kind would be timely and would enable us to lay the foundation for peace and sustainable development in order to emerge from the cycle of violence, conflict and poverty that for decades has been the lot of the peoples of the Great Lakes region.

We thank and commend Mr. Ibrahima Fall for his tireless efforts to bring about this conference and in working towards its success. The progress made thus far in the preparatory process also deserves commendation. The concept paper has been prepared, the goals and organization of the conference have been outlined and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has initiated an intensive process of consultations with Governments of the subregion, donors and other interested parties.

From 23 to 24 June 2003, a meeting of National Coordinators of the countries of the Great Lakes region took place in Nairobi, marking the beginning of the preparatory process. A provisional timetable for the various stages of the preparatory process and for the holding of the conference was proposed. We welcome the involvement of the African Union in this process and the appointment of Mr. Keli Walubita as special envoy of the African Union for the Great Lakes region.

The importance of this conference to the countries and peoples of the Great Lakes region needs no elaboration. The success of the conference will depend on the commitment and political will of those countries, but will also depend, in large part, on the support of the international community. It is therefore crucial for the international community to continue providing active support to the preparatory process and to the conference itself. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the initiative of Canada to create a group of friends of the Great Lakes region to provide multifaceted support to the preparation and organization of the conference.

We support the request made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 31 of his report, to strengthen coordination with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region as well as the financial and human resources the conference would require. We welcome the presidential statement that has been negotiated, as it includes a positive reaction to that appeal.

Regarding the countries invited to the conference, we should recall that there is a close interrelationship and many similarities between the problems faced by the Great Lakes region and the Central African region. We should recall that the many conflicts and massacres that have scarred the recent history of the Great Lakes

region have had repercussions in nearly every country of Central Africa, including the influx of refugees and illicit weapons and increased insecurity. Aware of those realities, at the 19th Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Brazzaville from 14 to 17 May 2003, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Central Africa demanded a greater involvement by the countries of Central Africa in the preparatory process and in the holding of the conference. My delegation wishes to take the opportunity provided by this debate to reiterate that concern and to insist on the participation of all Governments of Central Africa in the conference.

In conclusion, I wish to pledge my delegation's support once again to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, and to express our support for the content of the presidential statement to be issued at the end of the debate.

Mr. Trautwein (Germany): At the outset, I would like to extend my delegation's condolences to the Governments of Turkey and the United Kingdom for the tragic loss of life caused by the insidious bombing attack this morning in Istanbul.

My delegation associates itself fully with the concise statement that the representative of Italy presented this morning on behalf of the European Union. We also warmly welcome the important participation of Minister Madeira and Deputy Minister Shareef, as well as that of Special Envoy Mr. Walubita and Special Representative Mr. Fall.

Germany is grateful and thanks the Angolan presidency for the opportunity to discuss the international conference on the Great Lakes region. The idea has been on the agenda of the Security Council for a long time. It is only now that the conditions in the region are beginning to improve in a way that would allow such conference to address the economic, security, humanitarian and cultural issues that for a long time have generated regional instability.

Like its partners in the European Union, Germany fully supports the initiative for the Great Lakes region conference to be held under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. With the progress we are currently witnessing in the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi, the convening of the conference is indeed timely.

Allow me to make some comments on the concepts and observations contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

First, I would like to comment on African ownership. We see regional and African ownership of the conference — and indeed of the entire process — as one of the pillars of the conference and as vitally important for its success. Ultimately, only through the political commitment of all the countries concerned can sustained peace and development be achieved in the region.

It is common practice in an international setting to name agreements after the place where they were signed. Thus, we have agreements named Lusaka, Luanda, Pretoria, Sun City, Arusha and Dar es Salaam. That fact alone highlights that throughout the long, often difficult and still ongoing process for durable peace and stability in the region, the efforts of African countries and their leaders have been indispensable. We hope that all African countries wishing to contribute to the conference or to continue their contribution to the peace processes in the region will be given the opportunity to do so.

Furthermore, the conference can build on many African institutions and mechanisms that are already in place. We believe that it would be useful for the conference, where appropriate, to draw on the experience and resources of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the East African Community, the Southern African Development Community, the African Development Bank and others for a consistent and integrated approach to the issues that will be addressed during the conference.

My second point concerns the role of the international community. The second pillar of the conference, in our view, is support from the international community. That support can and will take many forms and will undoubtedly come from diverse forums — one being the Group of Friends that is in the process of being formed. We are grateful to Canada for its leadership on that initiative. Mobilization and coordination of donor contributions will be one of the objectives of the Group, but it will also be a forum for discussion of mutual expectations, concepts, ideas and procedures. As a member of the Group of Friends, Germany will support the preparatory process and measures that have been decided upon. Other forums will include the existing

bodies and frameworks for economic cooperation, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and mechanisms and dispersal of contributions. A coordinated approach will contribute to the efficient use of financial resources and personnel.

My third comment is on expectations. Germany firmly believes that expectations for the initial stage of the conference should not be set too high. There are many obstacles to overcome that, until recently, seemed insurmountable. The decision to design the conference as a process, rather than as a one-time event, accurately reflects the complexity of the issues that need to be dealt with. A successful outcome of the first phase of the conference would be agreement on a set of principles and clear benchmarks to assess their implementation. We believe that that is not an unrealistic objective, provided that the focus of the conference is on the thematic areas the Secretary-General has outlined in his report.

The fourth point I should like to make is on the thematic areas of the conference. After returning from its mission to the region in June this year, the Security Council once again stated its belief that a conference on the Great Lakes region could help to address and resolve long-term peace and security issues. The countries of the Great Lakes region have obligations towards their people, their neighbours and the international community. Those include respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, ending the culture of impunity and cessation of the illegal exploitation of natural resources and of support as well as of support to armed groups and movements. All of those issues can be adequately addressed within the framework of the four thematic areas that have been identified. Indeed, all of those issues are interrelated. Peace and development are two sides of the same coin: without peace, there can be no sustainable development, and without development, peace will remain fragile. Economic cooperation in the Great Lakes region cannot be separated from other confidence-building measures. We are confident that the actions the conference agrees on will reflect that interconnection.

My last comment is on the involvement of civil society. We welcome the intention to involve civil society. We are interested to learn how this involvement will be ensured and how concerns from different walks of society can be addressed throughout the process. The Security Council has recently reiterated that women must be included in all peace-building and development processes. We hope that the rather broad aim of "taking the gender perspective into account" will translate into the participation of women on an equal footing and at all stages of the process.

Additional information on the involvement of other stakeholders and the private sector would also be welcome.

In concluding, I should like to briefly touch upon an important element of peacekeeping in eastern Congo, namely the weapons embargo relating to North and South Kivu and Ituri. The Council should shortly address the question of strengthening the embargo so that it becomes an effective instrument. Indications that various actors are violating the rules set forth in resolution 1493 (2003) need to be followed up. We must respond in an efficient and effective manner to violations of Security Council resolutions if we want embargoes to have a deterring effect.

Regarding Burundi, the agreement between the Transitional Government and Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie/Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD/FDD) that was signed on 16 November in Dar es Salaam is encouraging. Should the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) still fail to enter into negotiations with the Government within the three-month period as set out by the regional initiative and instead resort to military means, the Council should, among other options for a comprehensive ceasefire, consider a weapons embargo against Rwasa's FNL. We must not allow one militia group to become an obstacle to peace and stability and thus prolong the plight of the people in Burundi, hampering at the same time the efforts to make the Great Lakes conference a success — a success which is so badly needed by the peoples of the entire region.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Criminal terrorist attacks have struck at the heart of the international community this morning in Istanbul. We convey our most heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to the peoples of the United Kingdom and Turkey.

The holding of this special meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes region under the presidency of your country, Angola, Mr. President, demonstrates the interest that the Security Council has always taken in recovery and stability in this sensitive part of Africa. My country pays tribute to the

Secretary-General for his statement at the beginning of our work and for his tireless efforts and dedication to consolidate peace and development in Africa.

The active involvement of the High Representative of the countries of the Great Lakes region and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the special envoys of the current Chairman of the African Union and of the President of the Commission of the African Union with a view to discussing and examining, together with Council members, ways and means to concretize, within the timetables established, the international conference on the Great Lakes is a source of efficiency and coherence in our common undertaking and mutual obligations.

Similarly, the resolute commitment of the European Union, as expressed so eloquently by the Permanent Representative of Italy, is a source of true satisfaction. My delegation hopes that from this interactive dialogue relevant elements may emerge better to define the efforts for the holding and success of the upcoming international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region.

To better understand the true scope and outlines of the future international conference, a brief review of the context of conflicts and their political, security and socio-economic impact is necessary.

Several studies of the conflicts in the region have concluded that those conflicts are engendered by the interaction of often complex internal factors and cross-border problems, as well as problems related to population movements, poverty, unemployment, easy access to light weapons and questions pertaining to governance, as well as by the activities of dissident irregular forces used by political and military actors pursuing solely their own interests. It is deplorable that these conflicts have led to the forced displacement of a large part of the population, sometimes serving as human shields and as sources of combatant recruitment for rebel groups.

After more than a decade of conflict and more than 2 million civilian deaths — a terrible toll, unfortunately far from being the largest among contemporary conflicts, according to several sources — my delegation now welcomes the fact that today in the Great Lakes region we can see a glimmer of hope on the horizon.

Against that background we repeat our full satisfaction at the conclusion, some months ago now, of several bilateral and multilateral peace agreements, and principles of good-neighbourliness and cooperation, which undoubtedly will provide benchmarks for the international conference that we are defining.

We are convinced as of now that the letter and spirit of those agreements will be reflected in the deliberations of the international conference in order to restore peace and security, ensure integrated regional development, and consolidate the process of national reconciliation and democratic construction in countries emerging from conflict or in post-conflict situations. In this regard, my delegation would express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the information contained in his report of 17 November 2003, a comprehensive report which gives rise to the following comments.

Regarding participation and in order to guarantee the success of the conference, my delegation would stress the need for involving, *inter alia*, all of the States of the Great Lakes region and neighbouring States in every stage of the forthcoming conference. This expansion would lead to a consensus on cross-border issues, ensure application of recommendations agreed upon, and facilitate international assistance that will be required.

In the preparatory process, we would note that assessment of the implementation of previous political agreements and their harmonization at the national level and by sector, would contribute to normalizing inter- and intra-State relations. In that perspective, the adoption of a regional programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former irregular forces should take priority. This indeed is the essential precondition for restoring peace and security, which in turn is needed for any policy of sustainable growth and poverty reduction. Moreover, despite the vulnerability of the security sector, far-reaching reforms are needed and call for the cooperation of all actors.

If indeed security, especially a structured disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme, would contribute to largely reducing poverty, nonetheless we should note that certain non-trivial obstacles remain at the core of the concerns of post-conflict situation countries, prominent amongst which we would note the fear that restructuring and

reducing the size of armed forces might in turn affect national security, the difficulty of proceeding with DDR with armed groups outside the borders, the near absence of opportunities for economic reintegration within latent conflict situations, and the reluctance of donors to provide funds for an unstructured regional programme.

My delegation hopes that the preparatory process, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General, will be examined carefully in depth by all parties concerned at the national and regional levels. For example, it might lead to the conclusion of a regional stability pact and provide a complete framework in several areas: security, social and economic and humanitarian.

My country gives its full support to the endeavours of countries of the Great Lakes and Central African regions, and the sustained efforts of the African Union and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, to bring about the success of this conference. We urge bilateral and multilateral donors, the entire United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other development partners to strive together and make every effort to make this event everything its initiators hope it will be in response to the expectations of the peoples of the region.

I cannot conclude without reaffirming that conflict prevention and peace-building in the Great Lakes region are the underlying bases of a comprehensive regional approach to the establishment of a secure environment, the promotion of socio-economic well-being and the effective participation of the Governments of the region in our common endeavours.

The President: I shall now make a very brief statement in my capacity as representative of Angola.

I would like to start by welcoming Minister Francisco Madeira, representing Mozambique in its capacity as Chairman of the African Union; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tanzania, Mr. Abdulkader Shareef; and Keli Walubita, Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his keynote statement this morning and to commend Mr. Ibrahima Fall, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing on the preparatory process of the international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region.

This initiative is an effective contribution to the creation of mechanisms for the strengthening of the traditional friendly relations among States in the region. The process of the conference also lends support to the efforts under way in that part of the African continent in general and in each of the countries in particular.

The process of the Great Lakes conference follows the logic of General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, and particularly of its annex pertaining to the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The Constitutive Act of the African Union also stands firmly on the same principle.

Some years after the adoption by the Security Council of pertinent resolutions and presidential statements, the new developments in the region have created favourable conditions for the start of a new era for the Great Lakes region. This enhances the potential feasibility of the conference, given its unanimous acceptance by the countries of the region.

An important role has also been played by the efforts of the African Union in the search for a global solution to the problems affecting the region since the Tunis Summit of 1994, while the Maputo Summit of July 2003 reiterated the support of the continent for the process. We welcome the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations.

The establishment of good and friendly relations among States in the Great Lakes region is a prerequisite for peace and development. Following this principle, the Republic of Angola undertook initiatives to enable the establishment and strengthening of diplomatic relations among Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, which culminated in the signing of an agreement, the Luanda Accord, and the creation of the Ituri Pacification Committee in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Republic of Angola has been one of the countries most affected by the lack of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. More than 2,000 citizens from the Great Lakes region, mostly from

Rwanda, were involved in the Angolan armed conflict. Among these was one of the leaders of the 1994 genocide, a war criminal handed over by the Angolan authorities to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. In addition, thousands of refugees from the region remain in Angola.

As the preparatory process for the conference evolves, it is our conviction that the issue of the scope of the conference should be carefully addressed by the African Union, the United Nations and, in particular, the core countries that are directly or indirectly affected by the conflict. Within this framework, Angola is ready to continue to make its contribution to the establishment and consolidation of peace, security, stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

At this stage of the process, more efforts will be required from all of us. In addition, it is imperative that adequate resources be made available for the fulfilment of this task. The assistance of the international community is pivotal. Without it, it would be difficult to successfully bring peace, security and development to the Great Lakes region.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Ibrahima Fall to respond to the comments made by members of the Council — briefly, if possible, given the lateness of the hour.

Mr. Fall: I will be very brief. The representative of France raised the issue of how neighbours would be fully accepted in the conference. I can only report that when the meeting of the National Coordinators was held in June in Nairobi, the issue of Zambia was raised. It was at that meeting that a decision was taken to include Zambia among the core countries. I think the same procedure may be followed. I intend to discuss with President Konaré of the African Union Commission the issue of how the Union and the United Nations can coordinate their action in that way.

The same representative raised the issue of what concrete actions will be put in motion after the 2004 summit. I think that this will be concretely responded to by the summit itself. I am sure that the preparatory process will help the summit to respond in this connection.

The representative of Germany raised the issue of how the involvement of civil society, especially women, will be ensured. What I can add to the report and my presentation is that the gender dimension will be kept. We are currently in the process, for example, of recruiting a consultant on gender issues for the Office of the Special Representative in order to ensure not only that the meeting of the women will be prepared in a timely manner, but also that, in our daily work in the preparatory process, my Office will take into account the gender dimension.

As to the involvement of the private sector and other sectors in the conference, I want to say that we are in contact with the labour unions and the private sectors in several countries of that region. We intend to involve them because, at the end of the day, this process should also be theirs, taking into account the important impact that economic development and regional integration can have on their business.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all the countries that have expressed their support for the preparatory process in general, the African Union and the United Nations partnership — especially the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. I also wish in particular to thank Cameroon and other countries that have referred to the necessity of providing adequate resources for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and have assured the Office that that would be reflected in the presidential statement to be issued at the end of this meeting.

The President: I thank Mr. Ibrahima Fall for his additional comments.

I think that some questions have been referred to the representative of the African Union. I would therefore like to give the floor to Minister Madeira to comment and respond.

Mr. Madeira (Mozambique): I would like, first of all, to express, on behalf of my Government and on behalf of the African Union, our condemnation of the despicable acts of terrorism that were committed in Turkey against the citizens of that country and of the United Kingdom. I convey to those two countries our heartfelt condolences.

The Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation wanted to know what the African Union can do to combat impunity. I want to say, first of all, that we in the African Union adhere to, and strive to practice, the principles of democracy, good governance

and the rule of law. Democracy cannot go hand in hand with impunity. We have striven to ensure that crime does not go unpunished by, in the first place, doing our utmost to ensure that the Rwanda Tribunal is in place and working. We have done the same with regard to Sierra Leone. With regard to the Lusaka Agreement, we in the African Union have been extremely active in ensuring the effectiveness of the tracking down, neutralizing and handing over of negative forces to the Tribunal in Arusha.

As the Council will have noted, many African countries have effectively adhered to all efforts and principles aiming to ensure that crime does not gone unpunished, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. At this very moment, we are working hard to ensure that the Peace and Security Council of the African Union is put in place in order that we may have a proper instrument to handle these problems. Many of the people who are in Arusha today were handed over by African countries, including your own country, Mr. President, Angola, which has been responsible for handing over very important personalities responsible for genocide in Rwanda who are now being tried in Arusha.

Having said that, the problem with Africa is one of poverty and underdevelopment. We want to do many things. We want to undertake many initiatives. But if we do not have resources, those initiatives will remain just words. That is our problem. As long as we do not have resources, many of those things will not move ahead and we may be erroneously perceived as merely sitting idly by and talking.

We will try to develop ourselves. We will try to become rich. We will try to have everything we need to prove to everyone that we are as committed as they are to ensuring that crime does not go unpunished. Even in our own countries, because of a lack of resources, there is severe institutional weakness. Our own criminals go unpunished. We look for them and we cannot track them down. That is also reflected at the level of the international community.

The President: I thank Minister Madeira for his comments and responses.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council recalls its Presidential Statement of 24 April 1997 (S/PRST/1997/22) and its other relevant statements and resolutions calling for the holding at an appropriate time of an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region of Africa, with the participation of all Governments of the region of the Great Lakes and Central Africa and all others concerned, to be organized under the aegis of the United Nations and the African Union, with a view to achieving a sustainable peace, security and stability for all countries in the region, in particular through the full normalization of their relations and the establishment of confidence-building measures and mechanisms.

"The Security Council considers that the holding of the proposed conference will help build on the progress made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi peace processes to achieve lasting peace and promote the national reconciliation processes in all countries concerned in the region.

"The Security Council welcomes the progress made towards the convening of the proposed conference, expresses satisfaction at the fact that the countries of the region have launched the preparatory process of the conference with the first meeting of their national coordinators, held in June 2003 in Nairobi, and considers it now crucial to follow up this initial step with intensified efforts. It takes note with appreciation of the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, and welcomes the offer made by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to host a summit during the year 2004.

"The Security Council encourages the Governments concerned, with the support of their civil societies, their neighbours and development partners, to continue their efforts to bring about a successful conference, based on a regional, all-inclusive and action-oriented approach. It stresses the importance of the participation in this conference of all States concerned, in particular those neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, and encourages the

States in the region to reach early agreement on participation in the conference.

"The Security Council emphasizes the relevance to the proposed conference of the Solemn Declaration of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) adopted by the Organization of African Unity Lomé Summit in July 2000, of the Maputo Decision adopted by the Executive Council of the African Union in July 2003 and of the Declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation adopted by the Governments of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda in New York on 25 September 2003, as well as of the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

"The Security Council appeals to the countries of the region and to the international community to provide sustained political and diplomatic support as well as adequate technical and financial assistance so that the conference is well prepared and timely, and so that effective follow-up actions are taken. It commends the active partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in all aspects relating to the preparation of the proposed conference, and welcomes the appointment of Mr. Keli Walubita as Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Great Lakes region.

"The Security Council calls on the countries of the region and the members of the international community to support the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Great Lakes region, and expresses its gratitude to the Secretary-General for keeping it informed of developments in the region and requests him to continue to do so on a regular basis."

The Council has thus concluded its present consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.